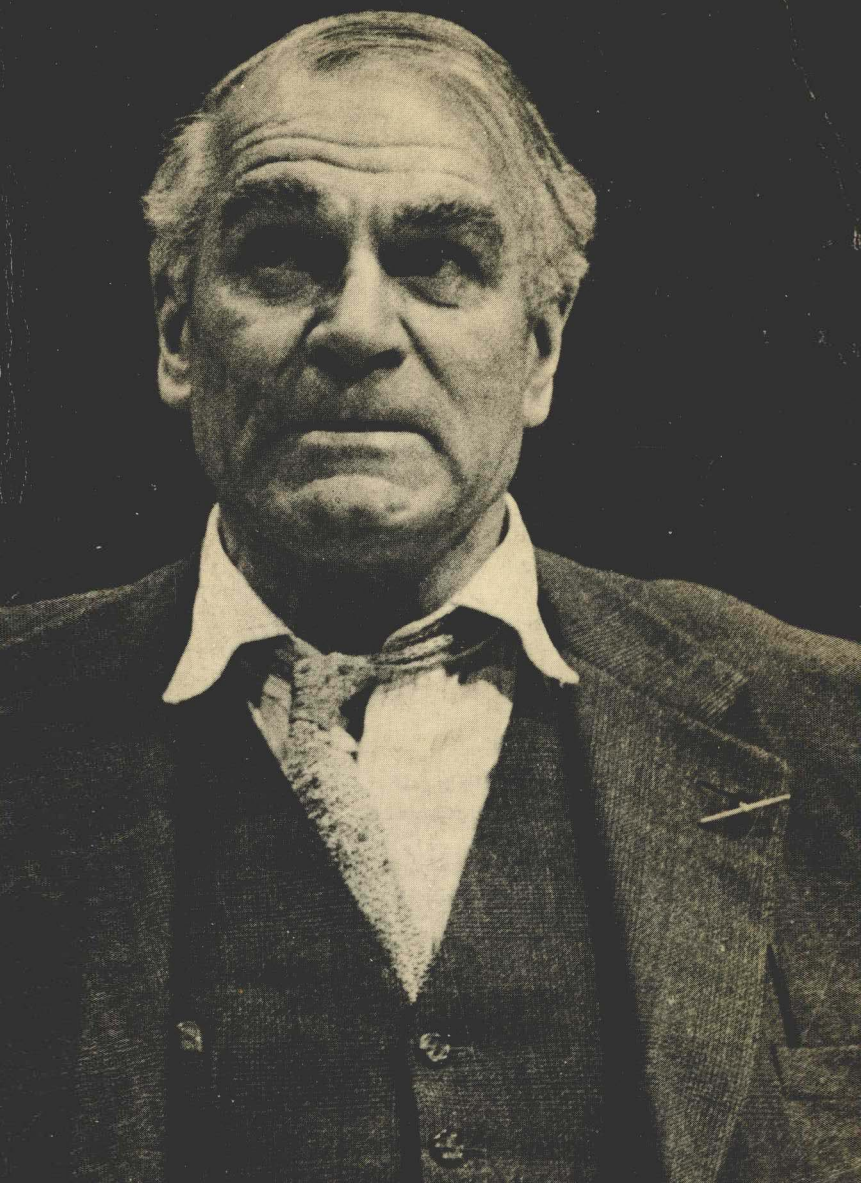


# Trevor Griffiths

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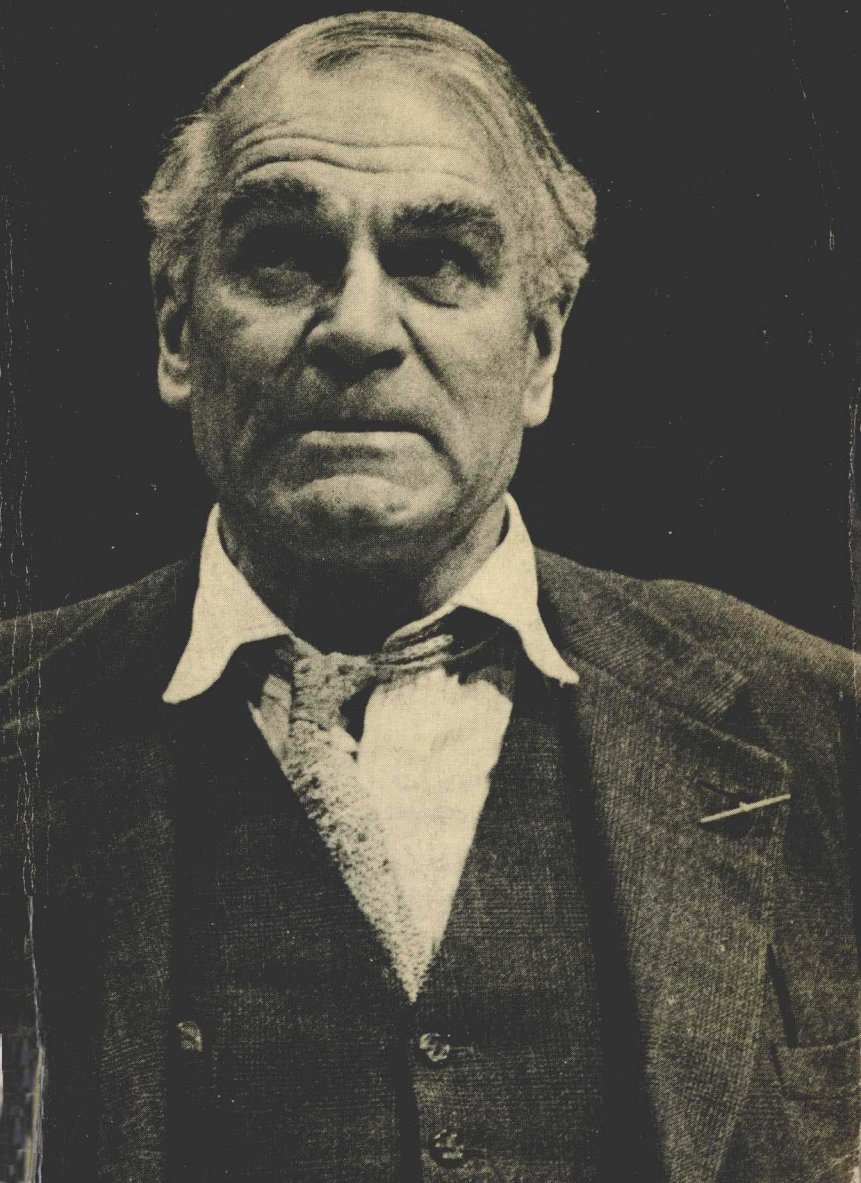
# The Party



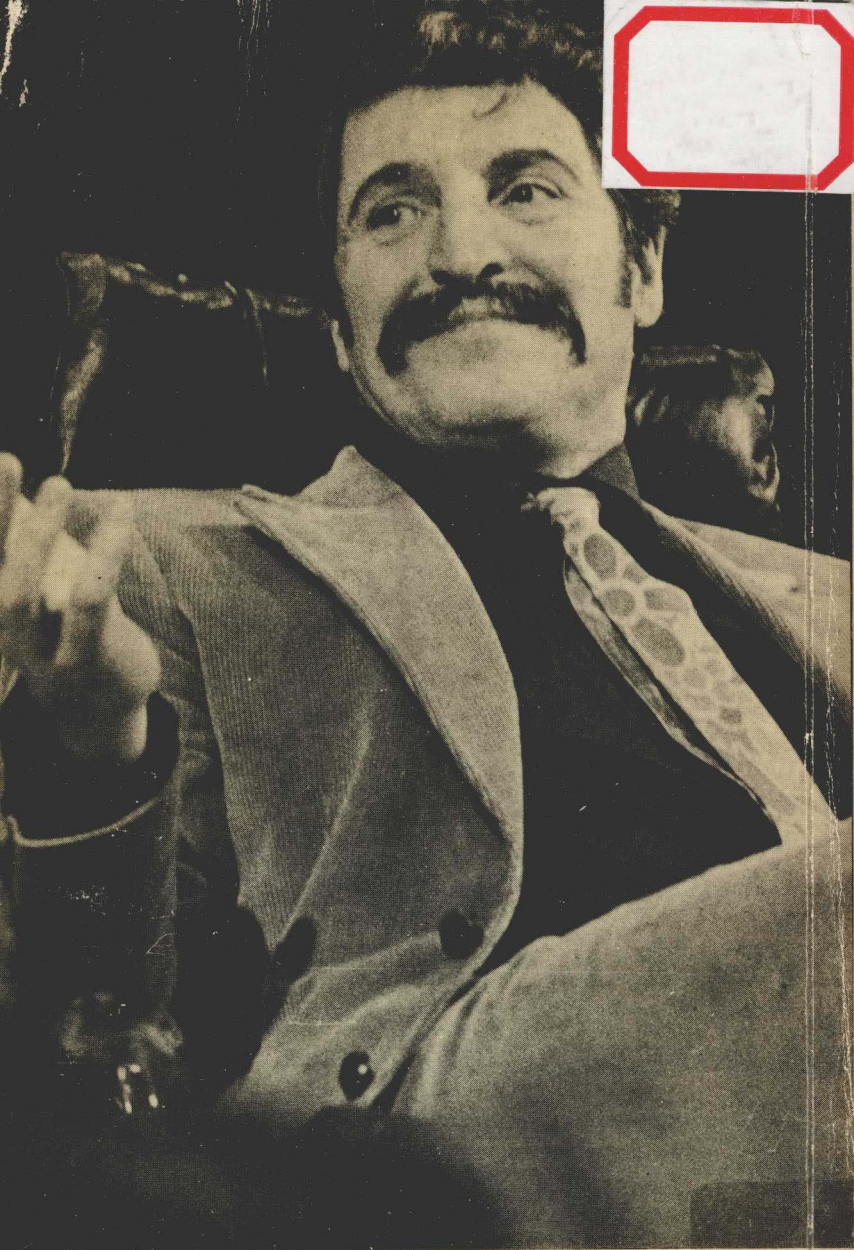
# Trevor Griffiths

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# The Party







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## **THE PARTY**



# The Party



by  
**TREVOR GRIFFITHS**

**Faber and Faber**  
**London**

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The first performance in Great Britain of *The Party* was given at the National Theatre, London, on 20 December 1973. It was directed by John Dexter, and the décor was by John Napier. The cast was as follows:

Sarah Atkinson  
Gillian Barge  
Anna Carteret  
Nicholas Clay  
Rachel Davies  
Frank Finlay  
Doran Godwin  
Gawn Grainger  
Ram John Holder  
Desmond McNamara  
Laurence Olivier  
Ronald Pickup  
Denis Quilley  
John Shrapnel

MILANKA  
KARA MASSINGHAM  
SUSIE PLAISTOW  
RICHARD MAINE  
KATE STEAD  
MALCOLM SLOMAN  
ANGIE SHAWCROSS  
JEREMY HAYES  
LOUIS PREECE  
'GREASE' BALL  
JOHN TAGG  
JOE SHAWCROSS  
ANDREW FORD  
EDDIE SHAWCROSS





## PROLOGUE

*Black stage. Track of very bad theatre orchestra playing the 'International' in spry waltz-time. Fade up huge, stage-high pic of Marx; mix to pic of Lenin; mix to pic of Trotsky (last days in Mexico). Take pic down to black. Single roving spot in centre. Music up, cymbally. An ancient Groucho Marx on—moustache, cigar, tails, bent back, fish eyes. He carries a clipboard of papers and a trail-mic, which he places in the mic-stand that squirts up from the boards. He looks at the darkness behind him.*

G: Good evening. (*To audience, but ignoring them.*) So what happened to the happy guy with the whiskers? (*Trotsky pic up.*) Come on, come on, you think I don't know Abie the Fishpedlar when I see him? Give me the guy with the nests in his face. (*Marx appears.*) Poppa. So what's tickling you, pa—apart from the flora on the face, that is? (*To audience.*) Which reminds me, did you ever hear the one about the 150,000 supporters of De Gaulle who marched through the streets of Paris on 30 June 1968 shouting 'France aux français!' and 'Cohn-Bendit à Dachau!?' You what? Oh, you were there. Well, well, well. Why don't I keep my big trap in my pocket? That way I could smile while I counted my money. But to our story, as they say. Captain Hugo C. Hackenbush, at your service. Explorer, adventurer, natural scientist, *bon viveur*, *homme moyen sensuel* bordering on the priapic and pretty nearly totally irrelevant to the rest of this play. But to our story. And talking of talkies I've been asked to put you in the picture with a few choice epigraphs. Sit down, madam. Your turn will come, I promise you. (*Riffling papers on the board.*) I have here a miscellaneous collection of choice quotations that I understand—nay, am

authoritatively assured—has a more than glancing relevance to what follows. (*He looks at the giant Marx.*) Pity you can't be here to do it yourself, hunh. Eh? You old . . . boulevardier, you. Hummm. (*Turning page, reading.*) 'The bourgeoisie. . . .' Wake up, madam, I'm talking about you. Give her a nudge, will you, sir? Thank you so much. May your back never buckle under the strain. 'The bourgeoisie cannot exist without constantly revolutionizing the instruments of production, and thereby the relations of production, and with them the whole relations of society. Constant revolutionizing of production, uninterrupted disturbance of all social conditions, everlasting uncertainty and agitation distinguish the bourgeois epoch from all earlier ones. All fixed fast, frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions, are swept away, all newly formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify. All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and man is at last compelled to face with sober senses his real condition of life and his relations with his kind.' Nobody's writing like that any more, believe me. (*To pic.*) O.K.? (*Pic of Lenin appears.*) Ouch. Or as they have it in Russia—Ilyich! (*Turning pages.*) Steady as she goes! (*Deep breath.*) 'Revolutionary phrase-making is a disease from which revolutionary parties suffer at times when the course of revolutionary events is marked by big, rapid zigzags. By revolutionary phrase-making we mean the repetition of revolutionary slogans irrespective of objective circumstances at a given turn in events, in the given state of affairs obtaining at the time. When people are seized by the itch of revolutionary phrase-making, the mere sight of this disease causes intolerable suffering.' (*He begins scratching his elbow.*) No, madam, that's a flea. I'm just a petty-bourgeois funny man with quasi-anarchic tendencies; it says here. (*Pic reverts to Marx.*) And talking of money—and if we weren't, by God we should have been—is he back? They do hug the stage these boys, don't they—talking yet again of money, see how this grabs you? Or indeed where. (*Clipboard again; cough, sniff.*) 'Money. . . .' My, how straight you're

sitting now. Me too, folks. 'Money, since it has the property of purchasing everything, of appropriating objects to itself, is therefore the object *par excellence*. The universal character of this property corresponds to the omnipotence of money, which is regarded as an omnipotent essence. Money is the pander between need and object, between human life and the means of existence. But that which mediates my life, mediates also the existence of other men for me. It is for me the other person. . . .'

(*Another spot up, side of stage. An Olivier as Timon.*)

O: Gold? Yellow, glittering, precious gold? No, gods,  
I am no idle votarist: you roots, you clear heavens!  
Thus much of this will make black white; foul fair;  
Wrong right; base noble; old young; coward valiant.  
. . . Why, this  
Will lug your priests and servants from your sides;  
Pluck stout men's pillows from below their heads:  
This yellow slave  
Will knit and break religions; bless th'accurst,  
Make the hoar leprosy adored; place thieves  
And give them title, knee and approbation,  
With senators on the bench; this is it  
That makes the wappen'd widow wed again;  
She whom the spittal house and ulcerous sores  
Would cast the gorge at, this embalms and spices  
To the April day again. Come, damned earth,  
Thou common whore of mankind, that putt'st odds  
Amongst the rout of nations, I will make thee  
Do thy right nature.

(*'O' light fades. 'G' light up.*)

G: There's nobody speaking like that anymore, believe me. 'The power to confuse and invert all human and natural qualities, to bring about fraternization of incompatibles, the *divine power* of money, resides in its *essence* as the alienated and exteriorized species-life of men. It is the alienated *power of humanity*.' (*Big breath.*) Yeah, well. If I had the choice between you and a bedful of money, madam, you'd have trouble making second. (*Pic of Trotsky asserts itself. He*

turns round.) All right, Abie, your turn will come, as the albatross said to the gannet. (*Trotsky pic fades. Only black now.*) Well, don't say I didn't tell you. If you see anything that looks like a ten-dollar bill—for instance, a hundred-dollar bill—don't hesitate to bring it round back, will you? You'll know it's mine because it'll have. . . . *Pic of hundred-dollar bill.*) Well there you go. (*Muttering, leaving.*) I really must do something about these *pockets*. How a man's supposed to keep a quiet mouth in there I'll never know, slipping down around your ankles, getting trodden underfoot.

(*Black.*)

*Caption: 'Je Suis Marxiste, Tendance Groucho'.*

*Black.*

*Caption: 'Nous Sommes Tous Juifs Allemands'.*

*Black.*

*Caption: 'Violez Votre Alma Mater'.*

*Black.*

*Burst of sound; film of Paris students marching, demonstrating.*

*Black.*

*Left screen: BERLEIT across a pic of the factory. Letters leave the left screen one by one:*

*LIBERTE;*

*And reform on the right, over a pic of a clenched fist. Chords of Archie Shepp's intro to 'Blasé' (Actuel 18) underneath.*

*Black again. Spot up on JOE SHAWCROSS and ANGIE in bedroom set.*

*Music up. A sort of abstracted fuck-ballet, the figures distinct in the spot, the room barely there as yet. The fuck is bad. JOE is frozen: ANGIE goes down with her lips. He kneels for a while, inert, takes it; then imperceptibly draws away from her. Music down; lights up. The bedroom.)*

## ACT ONE

### SCENE ONE

*10 May 1968. Early evening*

*Bedroom at the Shawcross house, SW7, somewhere. Big, white, sunny, rather cool. Hockneys and Botys. 7 ft. bed. Door to adjoining dressing-room. Door to landing.*

JOE clicks off the record player, walks into dressing-room. ANGIE half lies, half kneels on the bed, watching him; then stands, pulls on a pair of knickers and tights, sits smoking a cigarette, staring at nothing, deep in her own vacancy.

*Silence. Gradually, the faintest sounds of retching from the dressing-room area. She smokes on, hardly aware of it. Finally.*

ANGIE: You all right? (*Silence.*) You all right? (*No answer.*)

*(She looks round at the door, doesn't move. JOE appears. He wears a sweat shirt, underpants, sailing shoes.)*

JOE: What?

ANGIE: I said: Are you all right.

JOE (*looking around rather aimlessly*): What time are you going out?

ANGIE: Ninish. (*Looking at watch, standing.*) Christ.

JOE: Will you be late back?

ANGIE: Possibly. I'm not sure.

JOE: I can't find my jeans.

ANGIE: In the basket. They stink.

JOE (*into dressing-room*): Do they? (*Back in hopping into them.*)

Does Milanka know you're . . . ?

ANGIE: Ahunh.

*(He sits down, drained, on the other side of the bed, back to ANGIE, begins to put on canvas shoes.)*

ANGIE: *Are* you all right?

JOE: Yes. I'm fine.

ANGIE: You look terrible.

JOE: I'm fine. Jesus Christ.

*(Silence. Each busy, separate.)*

ANGIE: How was your thing?

JOE: What time is it?

ANGIE: Ten to. *(She waits.)*

JOE: What?

ANGIE: Frau Elise?

JOE: Fine.

ANGIE: Good. *(Lipstick.)* And how is it?

JOE *(getting up, zipping trousers, fastening belt)*: Addictive. I talk, she listens. What more could a man ask of a woman? *(Sings, absently.)* 'Freudians are forever. . . .' We reached my father today. She told me to tell her the most significant fact I knew about him. So I said: 'My father takes less home in a week than I'm paying for this session.'

*(He looks at ANGIE. She continues making up.)*

And she said: 'No. Tell me something about your father.'

*(CHARLIE, three or four calls 'Mummy' several times. ANGIE gets up, looks round for her clothes.)*

ANGIE *(with undemonstrative resignation)*: All right.

*(She walks into dressing-room. JOE stretches out, head propped on the bed. CHARLIE calls 'Mummy' once more, goes quiet. JOE smokes, vacantly.)*

ANGIE *(off)*: Try and get rid of Sloman, will you.

JOE: He's all right. He's lying down somewhere.

ANGIE *(off)*: This will be four nights running and he's pissed the bed every night.

JOE: I'll have a word with him.

ANGIE *(off, half irony)*: What will you say?

JOE: I'll say: Don't piss the bed so often, Malc.

ANGIE *(in, short stunning dress, boots in hand)*: Ha. Ha. You want to try getting it out sometime. *(Pause.)* Is he doing something for you?

JOE: Mmmm. A ninety. 'Play of the Month.' November.

ANGIE: Will he sober up in time?



JOE: Don't worry about Malc.

ANGIE: I'll try not to. If he wrote like he drank, he'd really be something.

JOE: He's something already. Drink helps him believe otherwise.

ANGIE (*not understanding*): What?

JOE: Nothing.

(*She persists silently.*)

He . . . can't bear the thought of himself as . . . successful . . . in a society he longs to destroy.

(*Long silence.*)

ANGIE: I see. (*Pause.*) Is that why he drinks?

JOE: I don't know. (*He begins rubbing the webs of his right foot through his socks.*)

ANGIE (*inspecting herself in the wall mirror; casually*): Is that what's wrong with you, Joe?

JOE: No. It's athlete's foot actually.

(*She stares hard at him.*)

Tinea pedis.

(*Silence.*)

Don't be simple, Angie.

ANGIE: Can't you answer simple questions?

JOE (*up*): No.

ANGIE: I meant: Is it getting . . . better?

JOE: No. But as Harold Wilson might put it, it's getting worse more slowly. We have it in hand.

ANGIE: Do you want to talk?

JOE: I thought you were going out.

ANGIE: I am but . . .

JOE: Well then. Go. I'm surviving.

ANGIE: Tell me . . .

JOE: Don't go on about it, eh.

(*He walks into the dressing-room. She hunts for a pair of cotton gloves in a chest of drawers.*)

ANGIE (*calling*): If I don't see your brother before he leaves . . . say good-bye for me, won't you.

JOE (*in, struggling into another tee-shirt*): Yeah.

ANGIE: Will he get the job?

JOE: I don't know. I hope not.

ANGIE: Oh? He seemed to think it was worth having.

JOE: There's nothing for our kid down here.

ANGIE: Have you told him that?

JOE: No.

ANGIE: He wouldn't thank you. What have *you* got on?

JOE: I've got a meeting. Just a few people.

ANGIE: Here?

JOE: Mmmmmmmmmmm.

ANGIE: Anyone I know?

JOE: No, I don't think so.

ANGIE: Is *he* coming?

JOE: Who?

ANGIE: John *whatsisname*. You know.

JOE: You make him sound like Moloch. 'Is *he* coming?' Jesus.

ANGIE: Is *he*?

JOE: Yes.

ANGIE: He gives me the creeps.

JOE: You've only met him once.

ANGIE: Once was all I needed.

JOE: I thought he was very civil.

ANGIE: Yes. Civil. Like a hangman's civil.

JOE: Don't be so . . . bourgeois.

ANGIE (*displaying herself*): What do you suggest I be?

Proletarian?

(*He looks at her in silence.*)

When are we going to talk?

JOE: I don't know. Not now, eh.

ANGIE: No. Not now. Of course. (*She's ready to leave. Gives herself a final look in the long mirror.*) I'll call in and see Charlie on the way out. Shall I tell him you'll be coming?

JOE: Sure. Take care. (*He blows her a toy kiss.*)

ANGIE: Don't make plans for tomorrow night. We're going to the Aldwych with the Carters.

JOE: All right.

ANGIE: I want *you*, Joe.

(*She leaves abruptly. He sits for a moment, looking at the door, then crosses to the record player, places a record on the turntable, selects a track with care, returns to the bed, slowly kneels*